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Veteran's History Project

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Prisoner of War (Stalag Luft 3, Sagan, Germany)
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Interviewed on 13 March 2003
At the home of Fred Leiby, Riverside, California

Appleton: My name is Ann Appleton. Today is March 13, 2003. This interview is taking place at Mr. Leiby's home as part of the Riverside Veterans' History Project, a Riverside Public Library partnership with the Library of Congress.

Appleton: Now, Mr. Leiby, tell us once more your name, where you were born and when.

Leiby: My name is Fred Leiby and I was born in York, Pennsylvania on July 23, 1923.

Appleton: And what was your family doing in Pennsylvania?

Leiby: My father was a baker in York and, after several years, we moved to Bridgeport, Connecticut. I think I was about eight years old at the time and in the third grade. I went to school there and graduated from high school in 1941.

Appleton: How many children were there in your family?

Leiby: Another son and myself. He was about a year-and-a-half younger than I, and he also went into the service. He quit high school in order to go into the service.

Appleton: But you did not. You graduated.

Leiby: I graduated. Yes.

Appleton: And then you went on to school?

Leiby: I attended a trade school and then I went to work in a defense plant. That was in August of 1941. Then in August of 1942 I saw this advertisement "Wear a Pair of Silver Wings. Join the Army Air Force Cadet Program." I was tired of the grease and grime of the defense plant so I took the exam, and I was fortunate enough to pass. I kept working in the defense plant until I was called up in January of 1943. Then I was given an examination to decide whether I was better qualified for pilot training, navigation training or bombardier training. After taking the test, I went before a major who was a little bit older than I, who said, "Son, you qualify very, very well for navigation training and you just about qualify for pilot training. I think you owe it to yourself and to your country to be a navigator. What do you want to do?" I want to be a navigator, sir."

Appleton: You learned very quickly. I can tell. Tell me, if you can recall, you said you saw the "Silver Wings." What did that mean to you?

Leiby: Wear a pair of Silver Wings. That means you're gonna be flying.

Appleton: Right. But did it mean excitement? Did it mean patriotism? Did it mean . . . or all of the above?

Leiby: All of the above. Excitement. Patriotism and becoming an officer rather than an enlisted man because I heard that your service was better as an officer than as an enlisted man.

Appleton: Oh, yes. What kind of training were you given?

Leiby: I was given some pre-flight training in navigation for about nine weeks and then I was given flight training for navigation purposes. Then in September of 1943 I completed both the primary element and the advanced element of navigation training. At that time they were starting to make some of the graduated flight officers and some of them second lieutenants. The basis that they used for doing this was on the basis of age. So, being one of the junior members of the class, I was made a flight officer.

Appleton: I see. Is that a special name for that rank? Then did you immediately ... were you attached to a unit?

Leiby: After that, I was attached to a group that was provisional crew training in a provisional group which meant that it was just a replacement group for combat units overseas.

We had two months of crew training and then my crew, of ten members, was sent up to Grand Island, Nebraska by train to pick up a brand new B-17G.

Appleton: Was this one of those with silver wings?

Leiby: It was an advertisement, I guess you might say. But we had named our plane *The Jerry Killer* with a German tombstone and a German helmet on it.

Appleton: Now, is this the plane that's going to take you overseas?

Leiby: This is the airplane that my crew flew overseas. We went from Grand Island, Nebraska down to Morrison Field, Florida and from Morrison Field we flew down to Trinidad and then to Natal, Brazil.

Appleton: I've heard that flight plan before.

Leiby: Have you? (Appleton: Yes.) And from Natal, Brazil we flew across the ocean to Dakar in Western Africa. When we arrived at Dakar, in our briefing before we flew the ocean, we were warned that a German submarine was stationed south of Dakar, Africa which tried to pull the United States airplanes into that direction rather than going into Dakar, Africa. You see, the radio compass was pretty strong in those days, so when the radio compass came on, about two-and-a-half hours out of West Africa, I had the compass and I had my dead reckoning because I was in bad weather a lot of the mission going over, so I wasn't exactly sure of my position. So with the radio compass pulling me this way a little bit, and my dead reckoning going towards Dakar, Africa, I kind of hedged a little bit. But then we were about ten minutes south of where we wanted to be when we hit the coastline of Africa. So I missed my estimated time of arrival by ten minutes.

Appleton: That's good navigation there. Then were you headed up towards Portugal . . . that direction?

Leiby: Oh, then from Dakar, Africa we flew up to Casablanca and the Germans had just vacated Casablanca about a month before and so they were dispersing the American aircraft in order that the Germans wouldn't have an easy target to come over and strafe airplanes on the base. So we were going down a road when the pilot hit a bump in the road and the wing of the airplane hit a tree and it cracked the wing off. So we spent Christmas of 1943 and New Years of 1944 at Casablanca while they fixed the airplane.

While the airplane was being fixed up, they noticed that we had called it "The Jerry Killer" and they told us the name was too provocative so we changed the name from "The Jerry Killer" to "Geronimo" and painted an Indian character on the nose instead of the tombstone and the helmet. (Appleton: Very American.) And then we flew up to Foggia, Italy. We were scheduled to land in North Africa but by that time the flying outfits had moved up to Foggia, Italy. So we went on to Italy and we were assigned to the 99 th Bomb Group, 347 th Squadron. On my first mission I flew with an experienced crew as a navigator. We were going up the Adriatic Sea and the gunners usually flew off a few shots of the 50 caliber guns in order to make sure that it was clear. One of the ball turret gunners in another airplane shot off part of our tail so we had to abort the mission and go back to the base. That was my first mission.

Appleton: Maybe the planes you fly on are jinxed. What do you think? O.K. So you're back in Italy now, but your own plane is O.K. right?

Leiby: Yes. Our own plane was O.K. We were just flying with another crew that day. Plus you weren't assigned to your particular airplane all the time you were over there. Usually the experienced crews got the new airplanes. We were a brand new crew so we didn't get our airplane right away. And the B-17G, the airplane we took over, had a chin turret and my job was to . . . well, there were two 50 caliber guns in the nose of the airplane, one on each side and the maps on a table . . . and my job was to take care of the maps and handle these two guns as need be.

Appleton: My, that kept you busy definitely, didn't it? (Leiby: Yes.) Well, during your stay in Italy, were you flying all the time?

Leiby: Yes. I was assigned to the 99 th Bomb Group in Italy from January 9, 1944 to April 30, 1944. My first mission on January 16 th was aborted and has been explained previously. At that time we were required to complete 50 combat missions before going back to the U.S. for further assignment. We received double credit for the longer missions. So while I received credit for 39 missions, I actually completed only 33 missions. Here's a list of the missions I flew. I was shot down on my 39 th mission. (See list of missions on page 27.)

Appleton: On this list, you certainly covered a lot of territory geographically, all the way from Romania over to France, and most of them I see however, are in Italy. On these sorties that you took, what kinds of targets were you usually sent to?

Leiby: We were sent to marshalling yards around railroad stations where we would bomb the trains and depots. And the other targets would be like the submarine pens at Toulon and also we would hit the aerodrome at various targets.

Appleton: I see. And they housed the planes?

Leiby: Right. And also we would support the troops. Like if we knew where they had a bunch of bunkhouses and things like that, we would bomb those.

Appleton: So you wanted to inhibit their movement as much as possible.

Leiby: Right.

Appleton: O.K. Well I noticed that on some of your destinations, some of your targets are very famous historical places such as Padua and Rome and so forth. I'm wondering since you didn't have smart bombs like they use today, how accurate could you pinpoint the sites that you were trying to knock out, and avoid places like, you know, St. Peters?

Leiby: Well, our targets were such that we wouldn't hit that close, like in Rome, the St. Peters. Our targets weren't that close to that place.

Appleton: I see. And what kind of bombs are you dropping at this time?

Leiby: We used fragmentary bombs which were clusters when we were going after troops. And we used 500 lb. bombs and 1,000 lb. bombs and, once in a while, 2,000 lb. bombs. We used the 2,000 lb. bombs when we would try to get the submarine pens at Toulon. We used the other types of bombs when we were going after other targets which, depending on the accuracy we had to use for the bombs. We usually used the 500 lb. bombs though. That was our usual. We carried about 6,000 lbs. of bombs.

Appleton: I see. Was there any kind of time table, like you went out on Monday, Wednesdays and Fridays, and somebody else went out on Tuesdays, Thursdays and Saturdays, or was there any timing that was set like that for your expeditions?

Leiby: No. Our missions were based on the weather primarily. And we would fly missions regardless of any particular day. Except there was a British outfit where we had our airplanes and they flew at night and we did daytime bombing. They did nighttime bombing and we did daytime bombing.

Appleton: So the Axis Powers were under constant bombing missions.

Leiby: Right. Night and day.

Appleton: Night and day. Well, some of those certainly were more dangerous than others. How would you know, or did you know, whether it was expected to be dangerous or not?

Leiby: We had briefings before each mission, and at the time of the briefing we were told that we would expect a lot of flack. That means guns from the grounds shooting at us. And also when we expected the fighters to be after us. We had that information at our briefings. Of course it wasn't always accurate but they gave us the best information they had.

Appleton: Right. And because it was all military targets, there were really no missions that you could fly and know that you wouldn't have any kind of retaliation. Is that correct?

Leiby: That's correct. Yes.

Appleton: So every place you went your adrenaline was high and you knew that there was danger involved.

Leiby: Right. Exactly.

Appleton: I see. Well, on some of these missions that you flew, are there some that you remember more than others?

Leiby: Oh, yes. Like I remember our mission to Ploiesti. That was the heaviest flack we ever flew into. When we got into . . . well, anyplace out of Italy, it seemed like we could encounter fighters.

Appleton: During these missions certainly there were times when you felt that your adrenaline was up and there was fear in your heart because some of that flack was getting too close. Can you tell us about some of those experiences?

Leiby: Yes. Several of the places that we went to, like in Austria, Romania, Hungary and Bulgaria, there was quite a bit of flack because the Germans were aware of the targets that we would be going to because that's where their munitions and airfields were, and that sort of thing. And the oil fields in Romania, and the submarine pens in France. And some of those, they would use the ground fire to shoot at us, and others they would use the aircraft, the German aircraft, the fighters, to intercept us. Usually we had some fighter cover but . . .

Appleton: So there were other planes that were trying to protect you?

Leiby: Right. They were fighter airplanes. American airplanes. These airplanes though could only go so far. They couldn't fly as far as we could usually. So when our targets were further in, or further into Germany, German-held territory, the fighters would have to go back and we would be on our own.

Appleton: I see. Well, are there times when the flack actually hit you?

Leiby: Yes. A couple of times. One time on the mission to Ploiesti our astrodome was shattered. The astrodome is a glass enclosure that's in the nose of the B-17 that the navigator, myself, would use to shoot the stars when we were going on long missions, like when we flew the plane over the Atlantic, I had to use the stars to obtain a position, from time to time. That was shattered during the Ploiesti mission. My hand was scratched from the shattered astrodome. But when we landed after the mission was completed, I went in to see the doc because, at that time, Purple Hearts were valuable. We were getting \$500 for a Purple Heart when we got wounded.

Appleton: Oh! That's an incentive.

Leiby: So I went in to see the doc and showed him my scratched hand from the shattered astrodome and his reaction was, "That's not a deep enough wound to merit a Purple Heart." So I didn't get a Purple Heart for that.

Appleton: So (laughing) put a band-aid on it, huh?

Leiby: Right. Yes. And, let's see. In Austria, we also had flack. And also in Budapest, Hungary. In Budapest, Hungary, that's when I had the piece of flack come up through the bottom of the airplane and it spent itself on my navigation table. And it was a piece of flack about 2 x 4" and I kept that as a souvenir. When I got shot down I had to turn in the piece of flack with all my other valuables. (Appleton: Oh, dear.) Which I never got back.

Appleton: Never got back. Golly. Well, let's see. Were there other times that you got hit?

Leiby: Yes. During the mission to Toulon we got hit by ground fire and our gasoline tank was hit and we had a leak that was pretty bad. We knew we couldn't get back to the base in Italy so we had to decide whether we wanted to go to Spain or try to fly as far back as we could since we were at Toulon, which wasn't too far from Spain.

Appleton: Now you and the pilot made that decision?

Leiby: Yes. The pilot is the final decision maker.

Appleton: I see. But you recommended because you were the navigator.

Leiby: Right. So we decided to try and fly back as far as we could. We got to the tip of Corsica and the pilot saw an airstrip down below and we decided we better go down there rather than try and go any further. So we landed on the airstrip, which was very short, and we went to the end of the runway, through a barbed wire fence, into a field. Now that airstrip was being used by American pilots to fly Spitfires.

Appleton: So they were smaller planes.

Leiby: Yeah. And they were putting hundred pound bombs underneath the wings of the Spitfires. Two bombs. One on each side. And they were bombing shipping off the southern coast of France with the bombs. Of course they'd have to go down pretty low in order to have any kind of accuracy from the Spitfires. Then, after three or four days . . . I guess it was four days, our airplane was repaired and we flew it back to base.

Appleton: So, did you look on the fighter pilots or the Spitfire pilots as having a more dangerous job than you did because they had to come down lower?

Leiby: No, I don't think their jobs were as dangerous as ours because they weren't getting that much ground fire from the ships that they were bombing.

Appleton: I see. And were they used more for harassment?

Leiby: Yeah. They were used for harassment more so than anything else, I would guess.

Appleton: My goodness. So, other than when you got shot down, can you think of any other times when the war material came close to you?

Leiby: Did I tell you about the 100mm shell that spent itself?

Appleton: No, but you're going to right now. (Laughing)

Leiby: On the mission to Wiener Neustadt, Austria a 100mm shell from one of the fighters, German fighters, came through our nose and spent itself in the swivel, but it didn't explode, which was fortunate.

Appleton: Did that put fear in your heart?

Leiby: (Laughing) A little bit.

Appleton: How long did you have to fly before you could get down from that mission with that thing in your machine gun?

Leiby: Oh, we completed the mission. We didn't think it was a dangerous mission, because it didn't explode on contact.

Appleton: Oh, I see. Good. Well, any other scares you had that you recall?

Leiby: One time the bombardier . . . I looked over to him . . . we were at 21,000 feet and he was passed out over his gun. And then I looked at his oxygen hose. His hose had been disconnected so I connected it up and gave him a good shot of oxygen and he came back to. After that I always bragged to him about saving his life.

Appleton: Well, actually, you did. I hope he was grateful.

Leiby: He was, I'm sure. (Appleton: Good.) Another time on another mission, a parachute opened in the nose of the airplane, just before we went to the target.

Appleton: Could you still fly?

Leiby: We could still fly. Oh, we flew on. We took a chance with it. In the event that we got shot up, we would have had to jump out of the airplane, just holding on to the chute.

Appleton: Which would have been very difficult if not impossible. (Leiby: Yes.) So, during this time you were flying every couple of days, is that right?

Leiby: Right. As long as the weather was good, we'd be flying every day.

Appleton: You didn't get any comp time, huh?

Leiby: No, but we did get two weeks leave. We went to the Island of Capri. That was after I had flown twenty-five missions. Another fellow and myself went over at the same time.

Appleton: Now, that was an authorized trip, right? I mean you didn't just decide to leave?

Leiby: Yes. It was this thing that we did. After so missions we got two weeks off and go to the Island of Capri or Naples or some place like that. And this fellow was my bombardier on a couple of missions so we knew each other pretty well. We went to the Island of Capri. And it was funny about the Island of Capri because it seemed like every other girl was named Maria. And we stayed in a hotel, and we were having dinner one day, and the waiter, before he came through the swinging doors, we see him drop a whole tray of bread on the floor. Then he put the bread back on the tray and he comes out to our table and he uses prongs to put the bread on our plates. (Laughing) (Appleton: A little irony there.) Right.

Appleton: Oh, golly. Well, you certainly had some adventures but nothing quite as dramatic as when you were shot down. On that day, was there any indication ahead of time that this was going to be a particularly dangerous mission?

Leiby: No, we didn't expect it to be as dangerous as it turned out to be, because we hadn't been challenged by fighters that often, going into northern Italy.

Appleton: Where was it? Where were you going when you were shot down?

Leiby: We were going into northern Italy . . . a place called Varese . . . which was just south of the Swiss border . . . a munitions plant in Varese was our target. We flew up the Adriatic in an effort to cross the coast near Bologna, Italy. German fighters hit us. And a German fighter came in towards our nose and set our number three engine on fire. The pilot left the formation, salvoed the bombs and put it on automatic pilot. Now the pilot was supposed to ring a bell or announce it over the intercom that people were bailing out but the bombardier and myself, we were in the nose of the airplane and didn't see that the engine was on fire 'cause the flames

went backwards. So I'm trying to get to somebody on the intercom and I can't get anybody.

Appleton: They're not there anymore.

Leiby: So, in the B-17G there's an astrodome in the nose of the airplane which I used for shooting stars and things like that. And I could see the pilot seats when I got up and looked through the astrodome and there's no pilot up there. So I said to the bombardier over the intercom, "Hey, Shorty . . . there's nobody here but us."

Appleton: Probably time for us to go.

Leiby: Right. Yes. So we bailed out. He was first because he always had his chute on but I had a chest chute which was awkward for me to handle the guns and the maps and all that, so I put my chute on and I was the last guy out of the airplane. I looked up at the pilot's seat and we had a head wind going north, so it would have been a tail wind going south . . . so I looked up the pilot's seat and then got on the catwalk in the bomb bay which is the easy way out of the B-17G . . . just jump off the catwalk. That's where the bombs are held, you know. I looked up at the pilot's seat and I thought to myself, "Gee, if I flew this airplane back, I could be a hero." But I knew I couldn't have landed the airplane, of course.

Appleton: How long did you entertain that thought?

Leiby: (Laughing) Not long. No. So, I could have flown down, you know, but I couldn't have landed it, of course. I would have bailed out down there. But then I went back on the catwalk and I looked down. It was 21,000 feet and I looked down and saw how far it was and I said, "Holy mackerel!" So I found out also that it was a lot colder outside of the airplane at 21,000 feet than it was inside the airplane. When I hit the ground, I was in a big field and a couple of Italian kids came up on bicycles and they said, "Facsisti come." So I got up to run and hide, you know, after I had taken off the parachute. But I couldn't run because I'd broken a bone in my ankle when I hit the ground. So the kids were loading me on one of the bicycles when a German soldier came up with a burp gun and they made like they were holding me for him. Then I held by him until an Italian soldier came over with a motorcycle with a sidecar, and he had already picked up my bombardier, who was in the sidecar. So I went in the sidecar with the bombardier. The motorcycle was driven up to a big cave that they used for an air raid shelter, and all the people came out and were looking at us, and a great big albino guy said, "Are you Americans?" And I thought I had a friend, you know. So I said, "Yes. We're Americans." He said, "God curse you!" and he said it like he meant it. Then an Italian soldier came up and spit in my face and I got kind of mad and somebody who spoke English said, "Don't be mad at him. He lost three members of his family last week from American bombs." You can understand why these people were bitter 'cause flying up at our altitude, we're not aware of what's happening down there.

Appleton: Was there any sign of the rest of your crew?

Leiby: Yes. The bombardier and I were put in the air raid shelter and then ...

Appleton: You were the last two to come out.

Leiby: Right. And then after the air raid was over, we were taken to an office building, into an office where there was a German officer with a monocle and a swagger stick and he was a real Nazi type. He was sitting at his desk and the bombardier and I were sitting across the way and he takes out a cigarette to smoke it, and my bombardier said, "Could I have one to smoke?" And he says, "Suck your thumb, you filthy American pig!" So, no friend there. Then we were taken to a jail and each one of us was placed in solitary confinement.

Appleton: Was this a military prison? (Leiby: Yeah.) It wasn't the town jail.

Leiby: It had been a county jail but the Germans had taken it over.

Appleton: I see. And what town is this?

Leiby: Bologna, Italy. The only way you could get out was to talk to the German interrogator. I went out to talk to him and he had a list of all the airplanes of our squadron and all the pilots on the list. The way that the Germans had gotten this was that we were briefed on our missions and there was a board in the office there of all the airplanes and the pilots and the Italians had access to this place. And they told the Germans about us. So, this German interrogator, he had been a schoolteacher in the United States and had gone back to Germany during the Depression and he got caught up in the war. He had a picture of a B-24 airplane. This crew had thought they were in Switzerland and they were just south of the Swiss border and they landed on an airstrip. The Germans came over and took over the airplane. So the Germans used these airplanes that they captured like this to fly along beside our formations . . . away from our formations, letting them know down on the ground what direction we're flying and what altitude and what the probable target is.

During my missions, I saw these airplanes off to the side too. B-24's or B-17's. The Germans had a few of these.

Appleton: And you knew they were Germans?

Leiby: We thought they were, but we weren't sure. We found out later that they were, of course. Well, all of my crew got down safely. There were eleven people in the crew. A normal crew of a B-17 is ten but we were carrying a cameraman at the time because the cameraman was supposed to take pictures of the target after we dropped our bombs. And they used that for knowledge about how effective the bombing was.

Then, after a few days we were put on a train with two German guards, all eleven of us. We were transported up to Stalag Luft 3, that's at a place called Sagan, which is halfway between Berlin and Breslau. Two months before we got there . . . Stalag Luft 3 is made up of four compounds, the center, north, south and west.

Appleton: That was only officers, wasn't it?

Leiby: Yes. But my sergeants . . . they used the sergeants there for different duties and things like that, and my whole crew went there 'cause they needed sergeants at the time. What was I going to say?

Appleton: Well, they're putting you in trains and taking . . . ?

Leiby: Yes. When we got to Stalag Luft 3 we were placed into the west compound and, two months before we got there, the British, who were in another compound . . . I believe it was in the north compound, had made an escape. They dug a tunnel underground to the woods which weren't too far away and the only thing was the tunnel was a little bit short. It wasn't completely in the woods so, let's see, 77 of the British prisoners got out of there and 74 were recaptured. The three that got away, two of them got up through the North Sea into Sweden and one of them got down into Switzerland. And of the 74 that were recaptured, Hitler wanted to kill them all 'cause they were in civilian clothes and that sort of thing, but his chief of staff told him that it would be bad for Germany's reputation around the world. So Hitler said, "Kill fifty!" So they killed the fifty. Of course that discouraged us from trying to escape later on. Although, some of us did.

So we were in the prison camp from April 30 . . . (Appleton: '44.) We were captured on April 30, '44. It was about a week or so before we got to the prison camp, so that would be in early May. We were placed in a barracks-like building which was broken down into rooms. It started off with eight people to a room, and double decker bunks and later on, when they had more prisoners than they could handle, they increased it to triple decker bunks with twelve people in the room.

Appleton: Were you fed well enough?

Leiby: No. The German food wasn't near good enough. We got Red Cross parcels. Of course they were reduced later on as the Germans got bombed more. The German food was black bread . . . black loaves of bread which included saw dust, wood chips in it . . . and in the fall, a lot of kohlrabi and rutabaga. They used to feed the cattle with that, I think. And also we had a kind of a pea soup and just about every other pea had a bug in it. (Laughing)

Appleton: I would imagine the guards weren't eating a whole lot better, were they?

Leiby: Oh, they were eating a little better, yes. They were. And we had stand roll which is a call out . . . a count . . . to see that nobody's tried to escape. And we had a little German captain who did the counting, "*Eins, zwei, drei, vier, fünf.*" And he'd always finish up with . . . we had a block commander who stood in front of the formation and the German Hauptman would always say, "Stand 'em at ease, please" after finished his count in German (Laughing).

Appleton: Did you annoy these people by moving around in line so that their count was off and that kind of thing? Or did you just . . .

Leiby: We played it pretty straight because that way we wouldn't have to stay out in the cold that much longer. And I remember one time in the wintertime, a German colonel was visiting and he didn't speak any English. So I'm standing in line there with my hands in my pockets and he says to me in German: "Get your hands out of your pocket! Get your hands out of your pocket!" But I didn't understand him so he

got mad. So finally somebody that understood German said, "He said, 'take your hands out of your pockets.'" So I took my hands out of my pockets. (Laughing)

Appleton: Were you issued clothing by the Germans? Or did that come from the Red Cross?

Leiby: Let's see. I think we were issued some clothing but I think it came through the YMCA or the American Red Cross, not from the Germans. It wasn't German clothing.

Appleton: Were you able to stay warm enough?

Leiby: Yes. I had an American GI coat and cap, you know, that comes over your ears. But when they marched us out, when the Russians started moving towards us and getting pretty close, they vacated the camp and they put us on the road. It was late one night in January 1945. It was after mid-night, I think, by the time we got out on the road. And we marched all night and it was really cold. I picked up some frostbite on the road.

Appleton: Did you sleep out on the . . . ?

Leiby: The first night we did. And then, after that, we slept in a church one night, and a barn one night, as I remember.

Appleton: Well, now, you're in the east, sort of towards the north, right? Northeast of Germany? (Leiby: Yes. Right.) And so, are you marching west?

Leiby: We were marching south and southwest. We ended up in Nuremberg.

Appleton: And how long were you on this forced march?

Leiby: It must have been about five days, I would guess. We ended up in a pottery factory, which was warm. We stayed there a couple of days, and then at a place called Spremberg, I think, and we were put in boxcars. These are called 4 and 8 boxcars and they put about sixty of us in the boxcar, which was pretty crowded, with a German guard. (Appleton: One guard?) One guard. Some of the boxcars had two but my particular one only had one.

Appleton: Were the guards generally not particularly physically fit?

Leiby: Most of them were older. The one we had in the boxcar was a younger fellow, though. He was scared of being with us too, you know.

Appleton: There were a lot more of you than of him.

Leiby: (Laughing) And, you know, they'd stop the boxcar and let us get out ... I don't know how long. I guess we were in the boxcar a couple of days. And when we could, we'd get out to go to the bathroom, or what have you. I remember one time I wanted to get out and I tapped the guard on the shoulder and he turned around with a gun . . . like this . . . and knocked me on the floor. And there was a major sitting

there and he said, "You never should have touched him!" And I said, "No kidding!" (Laughing)

Then we went on to Nuremberg and we were placed into a prison camp that had been occupied by Italian soldiers before. The place was a mess. We were placed in barracks and I was in the fourth bunk up and one morning I woke up with one eye closed by bed bug bites and the next morning, the other one was closed with bed bug bites. The Americans and the British were bombing the marshalling yards which are railroad yards which were about a mile or so from the prison camp. One night the British were bombing and everybody got down on the floor, except me. I stayed on my bunk and one of the bombs hit nearby and it blew out the windows and the doors and I got down on the floor with everybody else. Good thinking, huh? (Laughing)

We were there for about six weeks, I guess. I'm not sure about this. But, after that, the Americans had made a big push so they put us on the road to march us down to Moosberg which is near Munich in Germany. On the road we had an underground radio so the radio told us that sometimes Hitler was thinking about killing the prisoners. And other times about taking them down to Berchtesgaden and holding us there as bargaining chips so that it wouldn't be an unconditional surrender.

When we were marching, there were two guards in front with dogs, about 100 prisoners, and two guards with dogs in the back. So on this particular night, and we knew the American lines were only about thirty miles away, so this particular night, I ducked into the woods with another prisoner . . . a fighter pilot named Churchill, who was an undertaker by trade, (Laughing) and we started walking the next morning because it was cold. This was still in February or March. We came to a big farm and we're going across the farm, and a German farmer comes out with a big dog and a big shotgun and he says, "*Amerikanischer Kriegsgefangener*" which is: "American prisoners of war." I said, "*Nein! Nein! Ungarischen Soldaten.*" Hungarian soldiers. "*Nein! Amerikanischer Kriegsgefangener.*" So he marches us into the village and took us to the home of the buergermeister, who is the mayor of the village. And in these small villages, he's the chief of police and everything else. So he had a couple of cells in his house . . .

Appleton: And the village was called, what? Do you remember?

Leiby: I don't remember.

Appleton: How far had you gone off the march line?

Leiby: We'd gone quite a ways. We were near an autobahn because that night we heard the Germans being redeployed with machinery and all that . . . tanks and what have you. And we were in a bank underneath when they were going up on the roads. Then we started walking. See, at that time, they were announcing over the radio that they were marching prisoners through the area and for the civilians to be on the lookout for us. So, anyway, the German mayor called ahead to where the main body

of the prisoners was, and they sent a guard back on a bicycle, with a gun to pick us up. Then we were going down the road with this guard when we went by a Hitler youth camp. And a bunch of these Hitler youth kids came out and said, "Who are these guys?" "*Amerikanischer Kriegsgefangener.*" One of them pulls out a big knife and he says, "Give 'em to us!" (Laughing) So the German soldier said, "*Nein,*" and he waved his gun at them and we went on our way. Then we caught up with the main body of prisoners.

Appleton: Which was the same group that you'd left?

Leiby: Yes. (Appleton: Oh.) We caught up with the same body of prisoners and we weren't supposed to get anything to eat for 48 hours, but they snuck us stuff, you know. Oh, and that same night, two of my gunners and another pilot ducked into the woods. And we didn't know that they were there and they didn't know that we were there. And they got up to a river and they thought the Americans were on the other side of the river, so my two gunners could swim but the American pilot couldn't swim. So these two kids took off their clothes and swam across the river and they came out on the other side and a German soldier mowed 'em down. And the fighter pilot who couldn't swim, he waited until nightfall and he found a place where he could get through . . . where he could wade across the river . . . and he got through the line that way. But, later on, in a POW reunion . . . much later . . . I met a couple of the guys that were in the bushes when these two kids swam across the river and were killed. So they confirmed the story. So I had confirmation of that story.

At the same time, in connection with the two kids that got killed, who were Joe McGilligan from Norristown, Pennsylvania and Jack Patzki from Bly, Oregon. Now, the Japanese had been floating balloons with bombs on them across the ocean and two of Jack Patzki's little sisters were at a Sunday School picnic with a teacher and there were five kids, I think, and the teacher. One of them grabbed the bomb and it went off and it killed these people. But it was never put into the papers because they didn't want the Japanese to know how effective those bombs were. That they were killing people over here. So, that's just a side item, you know.

Then we got down to Moosberg and we were put into a prison camp and we remained there until April 29 th when Patton came through with his tanks and we were liberated.

Appleton: On this march, were there people that . . . you said that some did actually escape and made it . . . but only about, what? A handful?

Leiby: I would say more than a handful. A couple of dozen, I would say.

Appleton: Were there men that were unable to make the march . . . ?

Leiby: Yes. Those people were left behind . . . (Appleton: In the camp.) In the camp. And I think they were liberated by the Russians, but I'm not sure about that. So when we got to Moosburg we were liberated. The next day I went into town to a wine cellar where I met an English soldier there and he said he was living with a German family. You see, what happened was there were Russian prisoners and Polish prisoners, and some of these guys were going into houses, robbing them and raping the women. And the German families wanted Americans or British to stay in their homes . . . (Appleton: To protect them.) . . . to protect them. I told him, "Gee,

I'd like to do that . . . stay with a German family rather than sleeping on the ground." (Appleton: Absolutely.) So he said, "Well, tomorrow morning . . . this was at night . . . tomorrow morning I'll meet you at such and such a place, and I'll take you over to a German family and introduce you." So I met him the next morning and he took me over to this German family and it was an old man and his wife, three daughters and two grandkids. The three daughters were all married to German soldiers. One of them was on the Russian front and he hadn't been heard from. Another one was still fighting on the Western Front and the third one was a POW in the United States. So I got pretty friendly with the family.

Appleton: How long did you stay with them?

Leiby: I stayed with them for about three weeks. About three weeks, yeah. And I picked up some American food and brought it back to them and twice, these prisoners . . . some of those people who had been coming to rob or rape, (Appleton: Marauders.) The marauders, yeah, knocked on the door and I answered the door and there were no problems then. But this family had been robbed before. One of the stories I heard was that two Russian guys went into a house and there were three women there. They were in the living room with these women with a gun on them, and one of them says to a woman: "You come in the bedroom with me." She said, "Nein. Nein." So . . . BANG! He killed her. So he said to the second woman: "You come into the bedroom with me." And she went. It was that bad. They were bad.

Appleton: And were the German families, at this point, just scavenging for food? Or were their markets still operating where farmers had produce?

Leiby: They didn't have much food, that's for sure because they wanted the stuff that I brought. They were scavenging quite a bit. This one daughter, I managed to get a car from a compound that had a bunch of cars, and this one daughter lived in Munich in an apartment building. So I took her down there. She wanted to get some stuff out of the apartment. And it was a beautiful apartment building and a beautiful apartment she had there.

The airplanes were starting to come in to fly us out. Oh yes, on May the 8th, the old man used to listen to the radio all the time, and he says, "*Krieg ist fertig*." The war is over. I said, "*Nein. Nein.*" He said, "*Ja. Radio sprechen.*" The radio said so. So you can understand how Hitler, the way he talked and all, could really grab these people, you know. There weren't that many Nazis in Germany, really. Most of the people were just like you and me. So then they started flying us out and I went back to the camp and found out that I would be able to go out one afternoon. So I went back to the family and they said, "Well, we've got these American things. We don't want to get in trouble having this American food." So I wrote a note to them telling them that I gave it to them and it's all right, you know.

I got on the airplane and there was a bunch of British guys there that I got friendly with. They wanted me to fly on to England with them.

Appleton: Now, still are we all officers that we're talking about here?

Leiby: Yes. They wanted me to fly off to England with them but I figured I'd better get home. So I went to France to Camp Lucky Strike and there I met my co-pilot, the fellow who went over with us. After we flew so many missions, he got checked out as a first pilot and he got shot down before we did, with a new crew, see. He was flying in Austria at the time. Some of our airplanes were named after *Little Abner* characters. I don't know if you're familiar with Little Abner characters or not. (Appleton: Yes.) And he was flying Old Mose. Old Mose was a guy that was a hundred years old, or something like that, and we were in the Pappy Yokum. (Appleton: Very cultured.) Pappy Yokum ... the tail was painted red because Mammy Yokum was always catching Pappy Yokum doing things and spanking him, see, so his tail was always red. (Laughing)

We were in the 347 th Squadron and there were five of our fighter planes from our squadron that were shot down. (Appleton: Out of how many?) Out of probably sixteen airplanes. Of course, you never think that you're gonna get shot down. You're gonna finish your mission and go home.

Appleton: Well, especially if you have adolescent invincibility, you're still a young guy.

Leiby: Right. I was nineteen when I went into the service, of course and I turned twenty-one in prison camp.

Appleton: Of these people that you knew, how many were at Camp Lucky Strike at the same time you were? Just this one?

Leiby: He's the only guy I knew other than my crew that were there.

Appleton: And this is the crew you were shot down with?

Leiby: Yes. Some of them had gone home but

Appleton: And how many had made it?

Leiby: Oh, well, nine of the eleven. The two that were killed, I told you about.

Appleton: Well, now that you are finally on your way home, how did it feel, you know, that you were safe and that you were in American hands and you were going to be going home?

Leiby: I was very happy about that because, knowing that we were going home, was a real good feeling. Back to see the folks and see my brother, and things like that.

Appleton: Had you been in correspondence with your family while you were in Germany?

Leiby: Yes. I was corresponding with my mother and father and two girls that I had dated. These two girls were writing to me rather often when I was in prison camp. And at Christmas in 1944, they both happened to visit my mother at the same time, so my mother said, "Let's sit down and write a letter to Freddie. Each one of us." (Laughing) So they sat down and wrote the letters, and one of the girls showed her

letter to my mother and the other girl wouldn't show it to my mother. (Laughing) So that's how that happened.

Appleton: At this time, did you know that your brother was safe? Or had you had word from him?

Leiby: No. I didn't have any word from him. I knew that he was over in Europe someplace, still fighting the war.

Appleton: During your experience in Germany, who were the people that were closest to you?

Leiby: The people who were closest to me were the people that I bunked with in Sagan. My bombardier was probably the fella I was closest to. My bombardier, Johnny Moore, who was from Cornville, Arizona. He had been a cowboy for a period of time before he joined the service. And I remember in Casablanca, we were gonna go horseback riding, and they had these horses that we could pick one out . . . and there was this beautiful white horse with pads on his knees. And I said, "I want that horse." And he said, "Don't take that horse. He's got problems with his knees." And I said, "No, I want that horse." John said, "O.K." So he took another horse and then we started going down the road on these horses, and I started galloping, and the horse went down on his knees every time he moved. So I learned a lesson from Johnny in that escapade.

Appleton: Did you have any other adventures with Johnny?

Leiby: I stayed in touch with John after I got out of the service. I stayed in the reserves but John stayed on active duty. When he got out, he went back on active duty and he retired as a full colonel. I've been in touch with him and, two years ago, went to a 99 th Bomb Group reunion in San Antonio, and John lives near San Antonio, and I got him to come over to the 99 th Bomb Group reunion and I signed him up as a member. I paid for his dues. But a year-and-a-half after that, he died.

Appleton: But you got to see him.

Leiby: Yes. I got to see him. Right.

Appleton: Did you and Johnny have any high jinx or any adventures while you were in the prison camp together?

Leiby: We stayed pretty close and I went on a fifty-year reunion and I met a fellow there that was in the same room that I was in Sagan. I don't recall his name right off, but he got out of the service and went to Alaska and homesteaded up there. And he's still homesteading up there. The way he got the place that he's homesteading, you know, the most desirable land is grabbed right away and there was a guy in prison who had a deed to this land so he bought the land from this guy in prison. And he was also crop dusting up there.

Appleton: Well, again, in your experience in Europe, what were the two or so most memorable, most vivid experiences that you had?

Leiby: I guess marching out of Sagan when it was so cold and I remember, one time I sat down and I was in bad shape. One of my roommates saw me sitting there and he came over and gave me a couple of lumps of sugar. He pulled me up and I started walking with him.

Appleton: Did you ever feel you might not make it?

Leiby: Yes. At that point, I did. Yeah.

Appleton: 'Cause you guys didn't know how long you were marching, did you?

Leiby: No. We didn't know. We didn't know.

Appleton: What are some of the characters that you met while you were in service?

Leiby: Well, the most memorable character I met was General Patton, with his pearl-handled pistols and his swagger stick and very military looking. Very impressive. And of the prisoners, Colonel Alkire was memorable. He was the guy that headed up the west compound, and he was very military and kept things pretty well organized with the prisoners in the compound.

Appleton: And he was an American?

Leiby: He was an American colonel.

Appleton: One more question about Germany and then I'll let you get home. What things did you miss the most or fantasize about or wish you had the most when you were a prisoner of war?

Leiby: Food. Food, that was the number one subject and girls was the other subject. (Laughing)

Appleton: O.K. You sound just like everybody else that I've talked to who were in that situation. I was told that everybody fantasized their dream meal that they were going to have when they got home. Did you do that? (Leiby: Yes. Yes.) And what was it?

Leiby: My mother made some chicken potpie that was very good that I was looking forward to, going home.

Appleton: O.K. When you left, what ship was it that took you home?

Leiby: The *Henry Baldwin*. It was a liberty ship and it took us two weeks to get back to the States. Then, when I got back, I went into pilot training, and then into . . .

Appleton: Let's go home first. (Leiby: O.K.) Did your parents know that you were on your way or did they not know?

Leiby: Yes, they did because we had mail that we called V-mail, that we used to correspond. It was a real tiny . . . (Appleton: Real thin sheets.) Yes, they are. Small

papers. We had sixty days leave when I got back and, at that time, the war was still on and the war ended while I was on leave. And I decided to make a career of the military at that time.

Appleton: Well, what did you do on your sixty days? Besides eat.

Leiby: Dated. (Laughing) And I got together with the boys. The normal things that young fellas do. Twenty-one years of age.

Appleton: Right. So you decided to make the Air Force your career.

Leiby: Right. But then I went into pilot training but "washed" out. Then into intelligence. I took this intelligence course. While I was in the middle of the intelligence course, towards the end of it, earlier I had requested a transfer to Westover Field, Massachusetts, which was near my home in Bridgeport, Connecticut. The transfer came through and so I had a choice of completing the intelligence course and canceling the transfer orders, or using the transfer orders and going up to Westover Field. So I opted to go to Westover Field. They gave me a test and gave me credit for completing the intelligence course. (Appleton: Oh, good.) So when I got to Westover Field and they looked at my orders and said, "What are you doing here?" So they looked around for a place to assign me and they assigned me as a criminal investigation officer with the military police. That was in September of 1946. At the end of December, a big cut-back in the military troops was made, and the staff was reduced for the military police at Westover was reduced from five officers and a hundred ten military police to two officers and thirty-five military police. Three of the military police officers wanted to get out, and the provost marshal and myself remained. So I was made assistant provost marshal with all the jobs of the other three officers. Taking care of the guardhouse where we had about thirty-five prisoners, keeping track of supplies and all that, the guns and all that kind of stuff.

Appleton: Lots of paper work, right?

Leiby: Yes. At the end of December, they made this big cutback. A friend of mine was going to Georgetown University, the School of Foreign Service, and he put my application in. It came through in January 1947 that I could start going to college in February of 1947. After they made the big reduction in December, they wouldn't let any more officers out because they wanted to see what they had left. So the only way I could get out as an officer without getting completely out, was for purposes of re-enlisting as a master sergeant. The personnel officer, who was a good friend of mine, told me to use this method, then write a letter requesting that I be relieved of this obligation as I was going to college and was going to stay in the reserves and planned to go back on active duty after I completed college. So I did this, and it worked.

I stayed in the reserves while attending college and then when Korea came, I was assigned to a navigation training squadron at Washington National Airport, and they wrote a letter calling me to active duty, but they addressed it to my wife, so I called them up and I said, "Look. I think you meant to call me back to active duty, but you addressed this letter to my wife. What do you want me to do about it?" So he said, "Don't worry about it. We'll take care of it." Click. They never contacted me again so I didn't go to Korea. By that time I was married. I hadn't completed college yet and we had a child. So I just didn't call them back.

Appleton: Well, now, I do have to ask you this question and that is ... is your wife one of the two girls you were dating before the war?

Leiby: No. (Laughing) I got a bachelor's degree in business and public administration in June of 1951. At that time I was working for the Air Force as a civilian budget officer with a reserve assignment in navigation training at Andrews Air Force Base. I reached the rank of captain in the reserves at that time. Then after I completed ten years in the Air Force as a civilian budget officer, I got up to Grade 13 and I couldn't see a Grade 14 available in the Air Force, so I put in my application with the Civil Service for availability at Grade level 14. I was interviewed for three jobs. One was with Congress . . . Congressional budget reviews of government agency requests for funds. The second one was as a budget officer for the Social Security Administration. The third job was as a budget and fiscal officer for the European area of the United States Information Agency, which is a foreign service operation. I was selected for the foreign service job so I went over and interviewed for that. I was given a job for the European area. I stayed in that job four years and then I went into the foreign service.

Appleton: You were still living in Washington, in Georgetown.

Leiby: In Alexandria, Virginia.

Appleton: So then you stayed there. As an FSO, where were you assigned?

Leiby: In 1965 I had a choice of assignments to Spain or Austria so I opted for Spain and I had a reserve assignment ... I knew my way around the Pentagon pretty well so I found out that there was a reserve assignment for a military police officer up at headquarters USAFE in Wiesbaden, Germany. So I applied for that spot and I got it. I was a major at the time. I went up to Germany three times a year to do my two weeks active duty, plus my twenty-four days of inactive duty training, which meant two days counted as four days, so it was actually twelve days of work plus my two weeks of active duty.

Appleton: Well, that was pretty fancy that you could arrange that. So your family lived with you?

Leiby: My wife and my three children . . . I had three children at that time. We were assigned to Madrid, Spain and they went to school at Torrejon Air Base. Torrejon Air Base was the high school. My number one son graduated from Torrejon High School there. In 1968 they asked me to round-trip but my wife had some medical problems so I wanted to go back to the States. I opted to go back to the States rather than round tripping to Madrid. So I was assigned to the USIA inspection and audit staff in the United States, which meant I went out to different countries to inspect and audit their administrative operations.

Appleton: But you were back in Washington, D.C.

Leiby: Yes. I was two months in India doing this, two months in Pakistan, two months in Mexico and then I went to Viet Nam in 1969 for two months. This was during the war, to do the inspection and audit there. And they wrote a letter from Washington saying, "Look, we're thinking about assigning Leiby to Viet Nam. USIA

had a psychological warfare mission there." We had a staff of fifty military officers, fifty Foreign Service Officers and five hundred South Vietnamese troops. So the fella that got the letter in Viet Nam, showed the letter to me and asked me what I wanted him to do. And I said, "Well, do what you think." So he wrote back: "We'd like to have this guy come over."

So I went back to the States and I couldn't take my family over there, you know, because of the war. So I went home and told my wife that they wanted me to go to Viet Nam. She said, "Well, I've got the three kids here." Of course, my number one son was in junior college down in Florida with my dad. So she said, "I'd rather you didn't go." So the deal was, if you didn't take a foreign assignment to Viet Nam, they'd put you back in Civil Service. So I went in to see the personnel officer and told him that I guess I'd have to go back to Civil Service. He said, "Do you mind if I call your wife?" I said, "No. Go ahead." So he gets on the phone and he tells her: "He's a fine Foreign Service Officer. He's got a very good chance for a brilliant career in the Foreign Service. It's a shame for him to go out of the Foreign Service." So she said, "All right. Tell him he can go." (Laughs) So I went home and she said, "You rat! You told him to call me." I said, "No, no. I didn't think you'd change your mind." (Laughs) So I went to Viet Nam.

Appleton: Did they go to Hong Kong or the Philippines or some other . . . ?

Leiby: No. They stayed at home because we had a house there in a place called Waynewood just north on the river of Mount Vernon. So I got home three times a year.

Appleton: How long were you stationed in Viet Nam?

Leiby: About twenty months. So I got home three times. It was an interesting assignment too. I saw a little bit of the war over there, but mostly we were stationed in Saigon. I was the administrative officer for the USIA operations there.

Appleton: What were they doing . . . propaganda?

Leiby: Yes. We had three airplanes assigned to us with CIA pilots and these guys would drop pamphlets. One time we captured a Viet Cong guy with a pocket full of pamphlets and we asked him: "What are you doing with all these pamphlets?" He said, "They make good toilet paper." Of course, he didn't say it in that expression. (Laughing) So we knew our pamphlets were serving at least one purpose.

Appleton: They hadn't quite gotten into the right hands. What kind of housing did you have in Saigon?

Leiby: I had an apartment, outside in a compound. My quarters were a lot better than a lot of people.

Appleton: Well now, how long did you serve in the military and when did you retire?

Leiby: After I left Spain and went home, I was assigned to Air Force Plans and Programs in the Pentagon. And I was assigned to the European area.

Appleton: But are you still in the reserves now?

Leiby: No. I retired from the reserves as a full colonel. I took correspondence courses in addition to my reserve assignments.

Appleton: And when was that? (Leiby: 1976.) But you remained on staff as a Foreign Service Officer. Government work.

Leiby: I had two careers going. And as a plans and program officer with USAF, I was assigned to the European area. But after I went to Viet Nam, they transferred me to the Asian area. So I did five years there. I was ten years as a plans and program officer.

Appleton: And where were you in Asia, besides Viet Nam?

Leiby: Just Viet Nam. When I got home the three times I was able to do my military duty in the Pentagon. The two weeks plus the twenty-four days that I got credit for. After Viet Nam I was assigned to Argentina in the Foreign Service with USIA. and my family went with me to Argentina.

Appleton: Because they could speak Spanish 'cause they'd been in Spain.

Leiby: Right. By that time though only my daughter was with me because my number one son . . . well, he didn't finish college but he was working as a bartender in Alexandria, Virginia. My number two son was in college at the University of Virginia. He was a better scholar than my number one son. And my daughter was in the seventh and eighth grades while we were in Argentina. That was an interesting assignment.

Appleton: Did she go to a base school or . . . I mean an American . . .

Leiby: She went to an American school attached to the Embassy down in Argentina. While I was in Argentina, there were very active opponents to the government in Argentina and we had to be careful – the American Embassy. I had a house down there, but we had a patrol around the houses and we had radios in the houses to contact the Embassy in case we had problems. We had a man in a place called Cordoba in Argentina. He lived by himself and he was an amateur radio operator. He had antennas going up from his house and these opposition people were pretty active in Cordoba, and they were kind of against the Americans 'cause we were supporting the Argentine government. So one Sunday morning he got a knock on his door. He lived by himself. And he opened the latch in the door, and he saw this guy in an Argentine police uniform. So he opens the door up and this guy comes in and three other guys come in with guns and they sit him down in the kitchen next to his radio equipment. They're fooling around with his radio equipment and one of them lays the gun on the table where he's sitting by. So he grabs the gun and he tries to get the safety catch off, and one of the guys turns around and says, "He's got the gun!" So they shoot him and it goes right through his stomach. So then they take him to, what they call a peoples prison there, and they had cells in the basement of

a big house. They called in a doctor, and they thought he was going to die. So they took him down by the river, called the police station and told them he was down there. The Argentine people get the word first, so they took him to an Argentine hospital and called the Embassy. We felt he'd get better service if we flew him up to Panama to an American hospital. We flew him out without getting permission from the Argentine government, which was angry because they wanted to interrogate the guy. We were trying to save his life. He survived all right, though.

After two years in Argentina I was assigned back to Washington as a program officer for all of Latin America.

Appleton: Do you have any particular incidents from your time as a Foreign Service Officer that you'd like to tell about?

Leiby: When I went to Pakistan, at that time you weren't supposed to fly first class unless the only thing available was first class, so I was flying from to Lahore, Pakistan and when I got up there, the USIA Library was across the street from the Consulate General's office.

Appleton: The U.S. Consulate's office?

Leiby: Right. In Lahore, Pakistan. And at that time they were getting some activity opposing the government of Pakistan. When I landed there they picked me up in a station wagon and they took me over to the library. While I was in the library, some young Pakistanis came and threw some gasoline on the door of the library and set it on fire. Also, at the same time, they threw some gasoline on the station wagon that was outside the library. They set that on fire. So we were in the library and the door was on fire so we went out the back way, went down the street where we could cross over and get into the Consulate General's building. All my baggage was still in that station wagon, burning up. But it was a different station wagon, so I was lucky in that respect. Then after that the Pakistani government sent a bunch of soldiers into the library and into the Consulate General's office to guard the buildings. And we had a tough time getting those guys out of there.

Later, when I was flying back from Lahore to Islamabad, I had to fly first class and I was sitting next to a guy in civilian clothes who was the number two guy in the Pakistani Army. So we got to talking and he played bridge and I liked to play bridge too, so we talked about that. We had a bridge game going on Saturday and I asked him if he'd like me to pick him up at the Plaza. So I picked him up with one of the secretaries and she played bridge with him, and one of the secretaries played bridge with me, as partners.

Appleton: That was a set-up.

Leiby: (Laughing) So, the next morning . . . so that was Friday night. So Saturday morning he invited me over for lunch to his home. And his wife was a medical doctor and he had four children, two boys and two girls. And one of the boys was in service and the other one still in school. One of the girls had applied for the University of California, Berkeley. So when I got back to the States . . .

Appleton: Did he know what he was letting her in for by going to Berkeley?
(Laughing)

Leiby: I imagine not. Oh, another thing. After I met him, I reported back to the Embassy because he was an important guy in the Pakistani government, to the political officer, and I gave them his name and they put him the list to invite people to Embassy functions, you know. Then they asked me, "Well, how did you meet this guy?" I said, "All you got to do is fly first class on the airplanes of a country and you meet the important people in the country."

Appleton: Certainly. That's true. That's why I was so surprised when you said that you weren't supposed to fly first class.

Leiby: Well, that's when they had an emphasis on economy in the government. So when I got back to the States, I got a telegram from him. His daughter had applied for Berkeley and it was only two weeks before she was supposed to go Berkeley, if she was accepted. He told me the problem so I called Berkeley and I said, "Is she going to be accepted?" They said, "Let me look." So they looked on the record . . . "Yes, she is. We're just about ready to send out the letters." I said, "Do you mind if I call him and let him know that she's been accepted to the school, so he can make plans for her to come over here?" So, "O.K. It's O.K. to do that." So what I did was I called the political officer at the Embassy and had him call this guy so he would have a contact with the guy. (Appleton: Oh, very smart.) Yes. I thought that was a pretty good move.

Appleton: Right. Well, you're very adept in networking in that kind of thing because that was what your job required, certainly. (Leiby: Right.) So, that's amazing.

Leiby: That's the only contact I had with him after that.

Appleton: I see. Well, perhaps he also thought it was a good move, because he'd gotten what he wanted from you, too. (Laughing)

Leiby: Yeah. Right.

Appleton: Maybe he thought you helped to get her in. Great.

Well, now that you've completed your military career, as you look back, can you tell us how worthwhile you think your experience was, both for yourself and for the military? What impact did it have on your life?

Leiby: I feel that it was worthwhile for me to go into the military, both from their point of view and from my point of view. I did make a contribution to the war effort, I think.

Appleton: What would you say was the most significant things that you did in your career?

Leiby: Well, the first most significant was going into the service. And I think flying combat . . . flying the missions that I flew.

Appleton: Then when you were in the reserves and still working for the government in a civilian capacity, you also had important things that you did. Right?

Leiby: Right. I felt I was making a strong contribution in both my civilian job and being available if they wanted to call me to active duty, both aspects of it.

Appleton: Was there a particular event that occurred in your civilian jobs that you think impacted on the foreign policy of the United States?

Leiby: Well, the agency that I worked for . . . the United States Information Agency . . . was very important and I think it's a big mistake that they just recently integrated the United States Information Agency into the State Department. As such, it'll be downplayed.

Appleton: Swallowed up. (Leiby: Yes.) Several times, as we've spoken, you've talked about reunions that you had with people with whom you served. Are there any men that you have maintained contact with over the years? Constant contact?

Leiby: Well, the reunions that I've attended have been the 99 th bomb group, which is the bomb group I was flying with in combat. And also the POW experience. We have a POW organization in the area here, that I'm a member of. And the memorable experiences with these organizations . . . the 99 th bomb group . . . there's one fellow here in AFVW that was in the 99 th bomb group. He's a good friend. And also I maintained contact with Johnny Moore, my bombardier, which we discussed earlier. And Jim Koehne. He was my co-pilot when we went overseas and he was shot down earlier as he had been checked out as a first pilot. Memorable events would include . . . I went over to Europe for the 50 th Reunion of our liberation and we went right from where we started as POWs at Stalag Luft 3, and we followed our trail all the way to Moosburg.

Appleton: And you didn't walk.

Leiby: (Laughing) No. We didn't walk. We took a bus. At that time, General Arthur Exon, who lives here in the village (Air Force Village West), was on that trip too. He was in a different compound than I was in Sagan. We met the Exons during our Reunion trip here. That was before my wife and I moved to AFVW. Of course, at that time, we had come by to visit here and looking at the place because I had a job where I traveled. It was a part-time job as an auditor out of Washington, D.C., and Margie, my wife, would go with me to interesting places, like California. We met them there and it was a very interesting trip too because we were well received by every city that we visited in Germany. Usually the mayor gave a luncheon for us, or something along that line.

Appleton: A little different than the reception you had when you were a POW.

Leiby: Quite different.

Appleton: Were you impressed or surprised? What was your reaction to seeing these places as they are now, fifty years later, because when you saw them they were in devastation?

Leiby: Oh, yes. Oh, they'd been rebuilt completely, especially Berlin. The area where the prison camp was, near Sagan, there was nothing there but the cement base where they had water storage. That was the only thing that was there. They have a monument there though with a special plaque.

Appleton: Well, you have had a very interesting and, in many respects, a more complex career than many. And I thank you for participating in this. Remember that this interview will be going to the Library of Congress for their collection from all throughout the country. There will be a copy at the Riverside Library in the local history section and there'll be a copy at the Riverside Archives. Plus, you will get your own copy, with a transcript so that you can share it with whomever you'd like.